

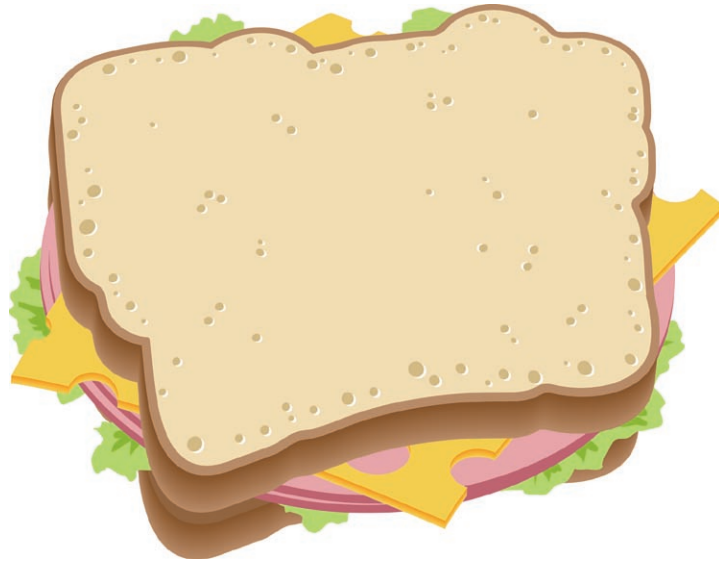
Olive Loaf

by Lynne Belluscio

A couple of weeks ago, I was asked to visit the 2nd grades and share stories about the history of LeRoy ... about the first settlers and how they built log cabins and built the bridge across the creek. About how they lived when there was no electricity, television, electronic games or cars or airplanes. There were no factories and few stores. The stores sold nails, iron kettles and window glass. You had to make your own toys and grow your food.

The people had to clear the trees and plant crops that they could eat. That people didn't have money to buy things. They had to barter or use credit. The dirt roads were narrow - only wide enough for an ox cart. And kids had to work to help their families. They worked in the fields. They churned butter and helped take care of their younger brother and sisters. They carried water and firewood. And if they had time, they might be allowed to go to school - - and they had to walk to school which might have been a long way. And more than likely they didn't have shoes to wear - - even in winter.

Sometimes I wonder if the kids really understand the story of the pioneers. It's hard for them to grasp the idea of "a long time ago." It reminds me of the story in one of the Jell-O television ads with Bill Cosby. Two Little kids are sitting on the steps with Bill, and everyone is eating Jell-O pudding. And Bill is telling them



that Jell-O pudding is good to eat and easy to make. Bill asks how long ago did their mom make Jell-O pudding for them and one little boy says "a long, long time ago." And Bill asks "A long, long time ago?" The little boy affirms - - "Last night."

So as I was telling the second graders about the pioneers, I mentioned that a long, long time ago, there weren't a lot of people living here. In fact when there were only a couple of families living here, people called the area the "Ganson Settlement" because that was the name of the family who lived here. A little later, when more people moved to the area, the officials in Albany decided to create a town and they named it "Bellona." (Giggles from the second graders.) "I know, it sounds a lot like bologna - - lunch meat, but Bellona was the name of the Roman goddess

of war." People didn't want their town to be named for the goddess of war, so less than a year later, the men in Albany changed the name to LeRoy.

Herman LeRoy was a very rich man who lived in New York City and he owned a lot of land in the area. A lot of the pioneers lived on land that they bought from Herman LeRoy. And so the history lesson ended - or so I thought. I heard that the next day, one of the teachers was reviewing what they had learned. "What did Mrs. Belluscio tell us about the name of the town before it was LeRoy?" Complete blank stares ...

"Remember, she said it sounded like lunch meat?" Another pause ... and then the response ... "Olive loaf?" And it might have ended there, but a couple of days later I received a batch of thank you letters and to reaffirm my worst fears - - three letters mentioned that they thought it was cool that the town used to be named for lunch meat.

Oh the legacy I have left with the second graders. I should have known, because earlier this year, I don't remember who it was, but someone mentioned that for years they had believed my April 1st stories in the *Pennysaver* about the flamingoes ... It just goes to show that some people have a tendency to believe anything they read or hear in the media, no matter how bazaar or strange.

The funny postscript to the flamingo story, is that many years ago, after I had written a couple of the stories, Stewart Seldon told me that he remembered reading that in fact someone had seen a flamingo around here and that it was believed that it had escaped from the zoo in Buffalo. I never followed up on the story, but to put my mind at rest, maybe I should.



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